

A Critical Analysis of Personal Culture Intelligence and Qatari Culture CHINE

The 2008 Economist article titled Small Country, Big Ideas accurately stated that “...the emirate [of Qatar] has assiduously wooed the United States, inviting its Central Command to set up its forward headquarters at al-Udeid, an airbase near Doha, in time for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. [Today], the base has one of the biggest stocks of American military supplies anywhere in the world.¹”

In June of 2010, I will deploy for one year to al-Udeid Air Base (AUAB) in Qatar as the 379th Composite Wing’s Expeditionary Force Support Squadron Commander or 379 EFSS/CC. As the 379 EFSS/CC, the mission/duties and personnel entrusted to me will be those that ensure the quality of life for approximately 10,000 joint forces/personnel assigned to AUAB, those transiting through AUAB for Iraq and Afghanistan, those redeploying from Iraq and Afghanistan, and those using Rest and Recuperation (R&R) leave at AUAB. A few illustrative examples of the types of missions and kinds of personnel entrusted to me in this permissive/non-hostile environment are AUAB’s food service and billeting operations and hundreds of local and third country nationals and expatriate contractors working within them. Local and third country nationals and expatriate contractors constitute a bulk of the permanent-party EFSS workforce in conjunction with rotational U.S. Air Force oversight and management of them. In addition to a culturally diverse EFSS workforce, the types of missions such as food service, billeting, laundry or recreational services primarily relies on acquiring goods and services from the local (Doha) Qatari economy via established/establishing reoccurring contractual mechanisms local Qataris and businesses. Qatari politically and culturally sensitive issues such as AUAB’s sustainment and resupply of alcohol or pork or appropriate live-band/comedian entertainment or attire while

¹ The Economist, Qatar: Small Country, Big Ideas, 5 Jun 2008. The Economist, Membership On-Line Access http://www.economist.com/world/middle-east/displaystory.cfm?story_id=E1_TTVDGSSG, accessed 24 Mar 10

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sightseeing the host country on an AUAB morale, welfare, and recreation tour falls under my EFSS/CC responsibilities/purview.

Although this is clearly a military deployment and the source of my commanding authority while serving in Qatar is the U.S. constitution, much of my CC work in this permissive/non-hostile environment is inherently better described in terms of classic business and management concepts and/or themes. Given, that I have never been to the country of Qatar or the Southwest Asia region, I sought in this critical analysis to increase, what Brooks Peterson titled in his 2004 book, my Cultural Intelligence¹. In doing so, I used Peterson's five cultural themes/dichotomous dimensions of equality vs. hierarchy, direct vs. indirect, individual vs. group, task vs. relationship, and risk vs. caution along five, zero to 10-point scales to glean my "Peterson Cultural Style Indicator."² This paid-for product/web-based service offered a different and reliable way of helping me understand my cultural style/profile³. These five themes (scales) and associated point-values helped me understand my cultural style in much the same way a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator helps me understand my personality style when interacting with others⁴. With my cultural style/profile gleaned and understood, my analysis then turned to better understanding a/the Qatari cultural style/profile. I used three, independent Qatar/post British-protectorate (1972) sources to help ascertain my values for each of Peterson's five cultural-critical themes/dichotomous dimensions mentioned previously⁵. My goal was to go further; strategically dig deeper to get beyond the over-used, often-memorized simple listings of do's, don'ts and taboos found in most literature and military training when analyzing or discussing a country's culture. Given this goal, the three sources used were two media outlets consisting of an all-English newspaper (one of two) in Doha, the Gulf Times⁶ and the Qatari government (Emir) funded Al-Jazeera⁷ satellite TV news network, the 2005 Constitution of Qatar⁸, and the 2008

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Qatari government developed “Qatar National Vision 2030.”⁹ Finally, a comparison between my cultural style/profile and a/the Qatari cultural style/profile I developed was completed to ascertain possible strengths and weakness in the performance of my daily duties while deployed to AUAB, Qatar as the 379 EFSS/CC.

A streamlined description of Peterson’s five cultural themes (scales) helps explain the results of my cultural style/profile presented in Figure 1 below. Equality represents a theme/style where “...people prefer to treat men and women in basically the same way.”² Hierarchy represents a theme/style where “...people expect men and women to behave differently and be treated differently.”³ Direct communication represents a theme/style where “...people prefer to say things clearly, not leaving much open to interpretation.”⁴ Indirect communication represents a theme/style where “...people prefer to express views and opinions diplomatically and count on the listener to interpret meaning.”⁵ Individual orientation represents a theme/style where “...people prefer to take individual initiative, put individuals before the team, and be nonconformists when necessary.”⁶ Group orientation represents a theme/style where “...people prefer to act cooperatively and establish group goals, put the team or group before the individual, and conform to social norms.”⁷ Task orientation represents a theme/style where “...people prefer define people based on what they do, move straight to business—relationships come later, and sacrifice leisure time and time with family in favor of work.”⁸ Relationship orientation represents a theme/style where “...people prefer to define people based on who they are, establish

² Peterson, Brooks. *Culture Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures*, 2004, pg. 37

³ Peterson, Brooks. *Culture Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures*, 2004, pg. 37

⁴ Peterson, Brooks. *Culture Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures*, 2004, pg. 40

⁵ Peterson, Brooks. *Culture Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures*, 2004, pg. 40

⁶ Peterson, Brooks. *Culture Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures*, 2004, pg. 46

⁷ Peterson, Brooks. *Culture Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures*, 2004, pg. 46

⁸ Peterson, Brooks. *Culture Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures*, 2004, pg. 52

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comfortable relationships and a sense of mutual trust before getting down to business, and sacrifice work in favor of leisure time and time with family⁹”. Lastly, Risk orientation represents a theme/style where “...people prefer to focus on the present and future and try new and innovative ways of doing things.¹⁰” Caution orientation represents a theme/style where “...people prefer to focus on the past and refer to past precedents of what works and what doesn’t.¹¹”

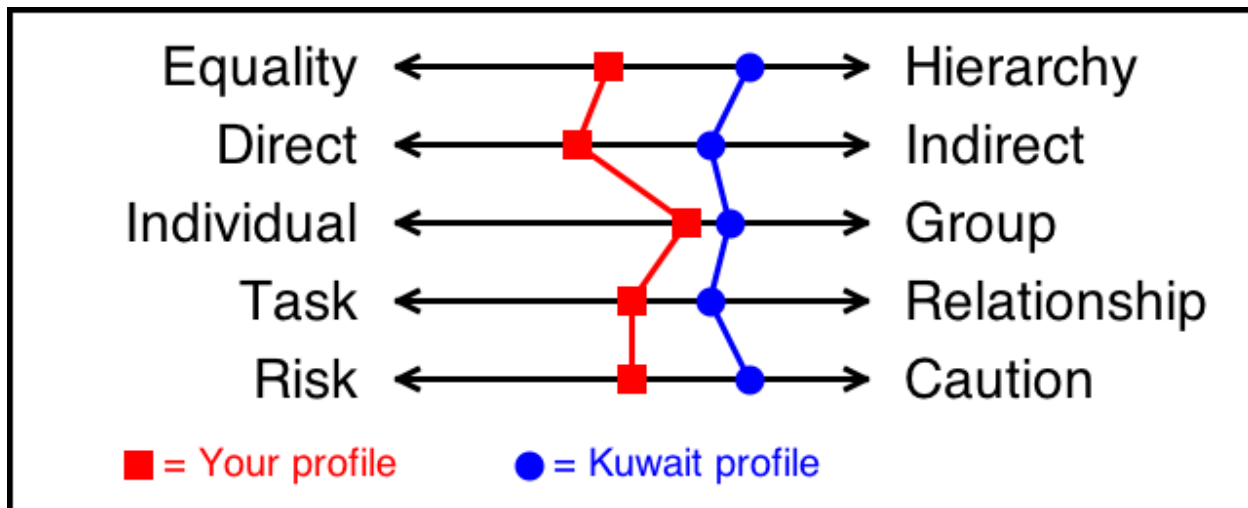


Figure 1¹⁰. My (Actual) Cultural Style/Profile or Peterson Culture Style Indicator Results

Note: My cultural style/profile was measured against a Kuwait cultural style/profile because similar data for the country of Qatar was not available. I chose Kuwait based on their historical and regional Gulf similarities with Qatar.

Analysis of Qatar’s media sources such as the Gulf Times and Al-Jazeera surprisingly revealed more of a direct communication orientation style than I had originally understood before researching. For example, the most popular Al-Jazeera program called “...‘Opposite Direction’ is a 90 minute showdown between guest opponents where viewers were encouraged

⁹ Peterson, Brooks. Culture Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures, 2004, pg. 52

¹⁰ Peterson, Brooks. Culture Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures, 2004, pg. 55

¹¹ Peterson, Brooks. Culture Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures, 2004, pg. 55

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to call and joint in. A recent trailer for the programme posed untypically blunt questions: ‘Why is that when an Arab leader dies, people moan and wail as if the nation can’t live without him? What have these leaders ever achieved for us? Aren’t they symbols of corruption and backwardness and tyranny?’¹²” Jihad Ballout, the channel’s spokesman said “The fact is that before us the Arab media were controlled by political and security apparatuses, which dictated what went in...Al-Jazeera transgressed all that. People suddenly had access to all kinds of information that had been suppressed for 40 years. This forced regimes to grudgingly allow a bigger margin of freedom.¹³”

In 2005, Qatar ratified a constitution¹¹. Analysis of the Qatari constitution revealed both anticipated and surprising results. I was not surprised to learn there was a grossly hierarchal orientation style captured in Articles 8 and 9¹². “The rule of the State is hereditary in the family of Al Thani and in the line of the male descendents...the rule shall be inherited by the son...if no such son, to the member of the family named by the Amir...in this case his male descendents shall inherit rule. The Heir Apparent must be of a Qatari Muslim Mother¹⁴.” Dissimilarly, I was surprised to learn there was clearly a group and relationship orientation at the most fundamental level found in Article 21¹³. “The family is the basis of the society. A Qatari family is founded on religion, ethics, and patriotism. The law shall regulate adequate means to protect the family, support its structure, strengthen its ties, and protect maternity, childhood, and old age¹⁵.”

¹² The Economist, The World Through Their Eyes, 24 Feb 05, pg. 3. Membership On-Line Access, http://www.economist.com/world/displaystory.cfm?story_id=E1_PGJDOQN, accessed 24 Mar

¹³ The Economist, The World Through Their Eyes, 24 Feb 05, pg. 3. Membership On-Line Access, http://www.economist.com/world/displaystory.cfm?story_id=E1_PGJDOQN, accessed 24 Mar

¹⁴ Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar, 2005, <http://www.diwan.gov.qa/english/qatar/constitution.htm>, accessed 19 Mar 10

¹⁵ Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar, 2005, <http://www.diwan.gov.qa/english/qatar/constitution.htm>, accessed 19 Mar 10

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In July of 2008, the Qatari government published and Ministerial put into motion a strategic document called the “Qatar National Vision 2030.”¹⁴ The mere fact that such a document exists favors more of a risk than caution orientation style than I originally understood. The 35-page document focuses on the present Qatar and a future Qatar and outlines bold new ways of approaching problems in the out years¹⁵. One such bold new way of approaching problems which speaks to more of an equality orientation style in a future Qatar is developing “effective public institutions and strong and active civil society organizations that: enhance women’s capacities and empower them to participate fully in the political and economic spheres; especially in decision-making roles.”¹⁶

Figure 2 represents the comparison of my cultural style/profile and a/the Qatari cultural style/profile I developed from the three strategic sources previously analyzed and discussed.

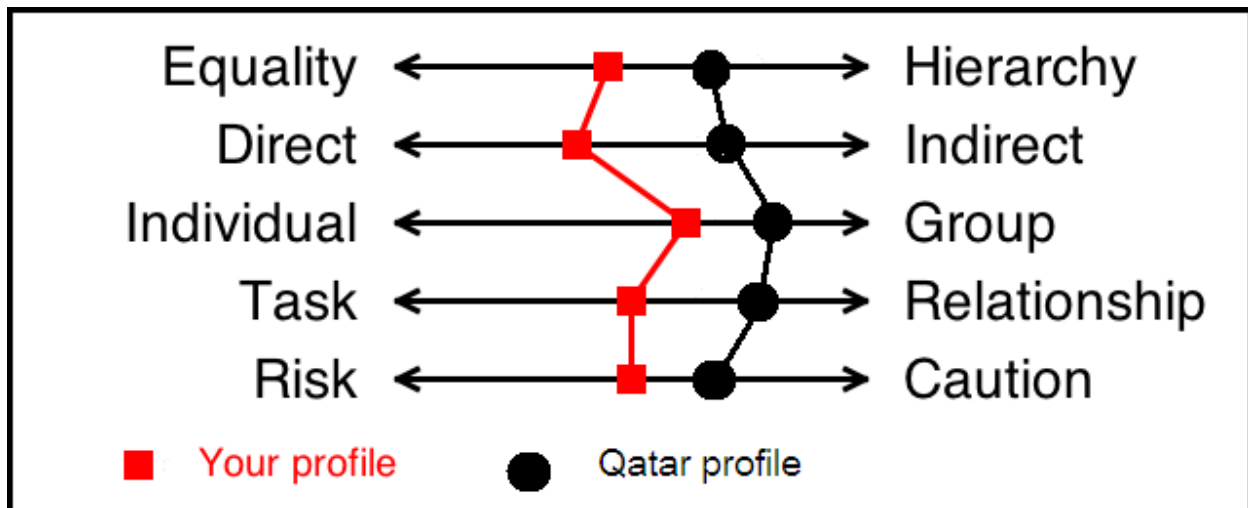


Figure 2¹⁶. My “Peterson Culture Style Indicator” vs. Self-Developed Qatar Style/Profile

Note: In theory, the Qatar style/profile is a compilation of actual Qataris’ responses to the same

¹⁶ Qatar National Vision 2030, 2008, http://www.gsdp.gov.qa/portal/page/portal/GSDP_Vision_Root/GSDP_EN/What%20We%20Do/ONV_2030, pg. 20, accessed 19 Mar 10

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scenario-based questions used to generate my “Peterson Culture Style Indicator.” That data was unavailable.

A comparison between these two indicates I need to recognize that Qatari men and women play distinct social and work roles¹⁷. Additionally, I need to be mindful that separate sets of expectations and limitations on behavior apply to both Qatari men and Qatari women in different ways¹⁸. I need to be prepared to use tact with Qataris when I normally do not¹⁹. I need to be mindful of how I say things, not just what I say and watch Qataris non-verbal language²⁰. I need to capitalize on my cultural style of group and team orientation to enhance, joint U.S. military and Qatari missions, interests, and issues. I need to be mindful that building a personal and trusting relationship with the appropriate Qatari decision makers will be more important than taking care of the pressing task/issue of the day, week, or month²¹. Lastly, I need to be mindful of looking for Qatari subtle (cautious) refinements over the course of my year in their country, versus focusing on major accomplishments or initiatives along the journey²².

This critical analysis helped me to identify my personal cultural style/profile in accordance with Brooks Peterson’s “Culture Style Indicator.” Additionally, these five cultural themes/dichotomous dimensions provided me with a methodology for researching three Qatari strategic resources to better identify and understand the various and relevant aspects of Qatari culture. A comparison between the two cultural styles/profiles revealed constructive mental and behavioral actions required over the course of my yearlong deployment to maximize both U.S. military and Qatari successes.

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- ¹ Peterson, "Culture Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures," pg. 11
- ² Peterson, "Culture Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures," pg. Appendix
- ³ Across Cultures, Peterson Cultural Style Indicator, www.acrosscultures.net, accessed 28 Mar 10
- ⁴ Peterson, "Culture Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures," pg. 33
- ⁵ Qatar, Countrywatch, www.countrywatch.com, pg. 9, accessed 19 Mar 10
- ⁶ Gulf Times, Anniversary Specials, 1978 – 2007,
http://www.gulftimes.com/site/topics/index.asp?cu_no=2&lng=1&template_id=170&temp_type=42, accessed 19 Mar 10
- ⁷ The Economist, The World Through Their Eyes, 24 Feb 05, pg. 3. Membership On-Line Access,
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- ¹⁶ Across Cultures, Peterson Cultural Style Indicator, profile results, www.acrosscultures.net, accessed 28 Mar 10
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- ²⁰ Across Cultures, Peterson Cultural Style Indicator, profile results, www.acrosscultures.net, accessed 28 Mar 10
- ²¹ Across Cultures, Peterson Cultural Style Indicator, profile results, www.acrosscultures.net, accessed 28 Mar 10
- ²² Across Cultures, Peterson Cultural Style Indicator, profile results, www.acrosscultures.net, accessed 28 Mar 10

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